

CENTERVIDEO, Film, Video, TV and Telecommunication 1968-1981.

At the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, C.A.V.S./M.I.T.

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Excerpts from Tambellini's Black Electromedia
(an interview by Sal Fallica)

Instinctively I took needles and scratching tools taking away the surface and my forms appeared - the spinning discs the non-existing moons 3 the black suns. Then I burned parts of them as I had burned paper years before and I went to my studio to paint on slides the black enamel forms and the studio was covered with eight-foot painting and fourteen-foot paintings with black discs suspended in black spaces. And I went on painting one hundred slides and one more hundred which grew close to two thousand tiny thirty-five millimeter glass slides on the working table, on the eating table, on every possible table among dirty dishes, left-over food crawling west-side roaches on the floor on the newspaper on the shelf and I called them the Space Series, the Internal Series, the Simultaneous Series, the Periscope, the Moon Dial, the Black on Black.

We say underground. Those days underground was really underground. The slides were shown at night on a rooftop on 6th and Avenue D. They were shown in my loft open to the public and those days there were the Black Poets on the Lower East Side in '63. We exchanged views and fights and criticisms and we worked together and everything expanded in all directions as a need to give ...

transformed into BLACK 2 with my black space forms the bombardment of lights the simultaneous events the sounds from the streets of Harlem irritating suburbia, awakening the new generation. The reaction was always the same: the middle class irritated; the young excited. To this day I wish to thank Don Ross for daring to present the truth in his half page article of the Sunday Herald Tribune. He felt the beginning and titled the article "Tambellini's BLACK 2: Rebellion In Art Form." That's how it all came about. We are the electrical people who look at the moon and move with the light. We are the primitives of a new era.

Sal Fallica: Could you tell me something about your childhood and how it has influenced your present work?

Aldo Tambellini: Going back to the age of seven while in Italy, I had a lanterna magica which is a primitive kind of projector. The film was cranked by hand. It also showed slides which were picture series of folk stories. The movies were clips from Tom Mix, other cowboy rejects and whatever odds and ends were available. At the age of ten, I spent half a year in bed with a combination of pleurisy, pneumonia and bronchitis and then I had a puppet theater that involved days of painting scenery, making costumes and writing plays which I later performed in front of live audiences for the price of 10 Italian cents. At eleven I entered the Art Institute of Lucca where we learned drawings, sculpture and painting frescoes. In even younger days I created fires from big piles of straw. Then when I was fourteen on the day of Epiphany, the American B 29's killed twenty-one of my neighbors and I luckily escaped, for the bombs in the backyard did not explode. I was under the German Occupation, the so-called American liberation and the destruction of a

culture that was part of my heritage. All this I'm sure has relationship to the Black idea, to the large philosophical concept.

Sal Fallica: Recently you are involved with television.

Aldo Tambellini: Let me state one thing first. I have never had a TV set in my place on principle. On several occasions when I appeared on pre-recorded interviews I would go into a bar and ask a bartender to tune in the particular channel so that I could see it. I had never had television for it had that kind of energy I wanted to work with and give back to it. I'm working with television because I want to get that energy out. I want that energy to be released to get to you. I want that energy constantly pulling you in. Television sucks you in. It is a live medium. The emotion is seen and felt while I'm giving it. To get to the heart of the media and let it pulsate in a non-verbal communication. To go to tomorrow to the black spaces out there. There is life there asking communication but we offer dead language. If the black sun gives light let's give the sun back.

Aldo Tambellini

"We are the primitives of a new era"

Myself - a part of what shaped the events - one of the forces that made it happen, recollecting the sixties has the speed of an electronic switcher - switching channels...multiple input... multiple output.

Electromedia was the fusion of the various art and media - breaking media away from its "traditional media role" - bringing it into the area of modern art - bringing the other arts - poetry - sounds - painting - kinetic sculpture - into a time/space reorientation toward media transforming both the arts and the media....

I came to media as a social reaction against what kept the art media under control - for media was outside of art. No gallery or museum in 1967 in New York City would give a serious thought to a CV tape. For months I was obsessed by the media - looking at it in bars and other public places - analyzing it. I had caused events which were not covered by the printed media as one in front of 3 museums in 1961 where 18 reporters did not write a line about the mock demonstration - giving a golden screw award to a museum with a song sung by 4 Puerto Rican teenagers. But Gabe Pressman - from a TV network came with a movable TV truck and interviewed me in front of the Museum of Modern Art. I was becoming aware of the directness of the media and its large potential audience. A media which in the hands of the artist could create its own audience. Like creating images directly on film - video had the reality of directness.

Summer of '67 - New York City - When I was able to afford a video tape machine and a camera - I went to Willoughby on 32nd street in New York and purchased the first model that was on the market - SONY CV 2000 videocorder which was considered movable but not portable for the actual portopak came in much later (1969). I arrived at the Gate theater with the equipment and a 24" monitor. I mounted the camera on a tripod - set up a microphone - set up a feedback with the sound - took a strong portable light and created simultaneously live movements with the light

directly on the camera - recording this as my first videotape. I proceeded to burn permanent spots on the vidicon. That afternoon I produced the first one-half hour segments and the following day it became an hour. It was the tape shown on Channel 7 - ABC-TV New York.

to show that light is a constant moving force an ever changing form that light is energy and energy is going through us the same energy which is going through the universe today and when creative people begin to get involved with this idea of energy rather than the idea of making pictures then we will come to some creative aspect not belonging to one particular class but toward a new exploration which is for all.

black video 2 – interview, ABC-TV channel 7 NYC
December 2, 1967

I couldn't find anyone to make a copy of the tape until I found a place called Videoflight near the airport. This was the first time that I had ever worked with video technicians and engineers. They were involved with a major airline putting movies on videotape for passenger flights. I worked with television testing equipment to make my second videotape using their waveform monitor, etc.